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STATINTL

Reds Reveal Spy Role of 'Mr. R. Abel'

CPYRGHT

MOSCOW, May 5 (UPI).—The letter to the Soviet government newspaper Pravda said, "Thank you, for the return of our husband and father." It was signed, "Mr. R. Abel and daughter."

The letter appeared in February, 1962, and probably mystified Soviet readers. It carried no mention of Mr. R. Abel, who he was, what he did or why his wife and daughter were grateful for his "safe return."

On Moscow television yesterday, Russians learned publicly for the first time that R. Abel was Col. Rudolph Abel, a Soviet masterspy. Television commentator Sergei Smirnov disclosed that Abel was honored by the government after his exchange in 1962 by a "foreign power" for American U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers.

TOLD OF ATTACK

It was revealed that Abel was responsible for providing Soviet intelligence with reports on the impending Nazi attack in 1941. Abel joined the Communist Party in 1931 after serving in the Russian secret service from 1927.

The only thing Soviet viewers were not told yesterday was that the "foreign power" was the United States, which arrested Abel in Brooklyn on June 21, 1957, and charged him with heading a Soviet spy ring which for 11 years transmitted military and atomic energy secrets to Moscow.

Abel was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Mr. Powers was imprisoned in Russia for two years after his U-2 plane was shot down over Russia in May, 1960. The sentence was 10 years, but exchange of Mr. Powers for Abel was arranged and Abel was returned to the Soviets via East Berlin on Feb. 10, 1962.

Mr. Powers, then in the employ of the Central Intelligence Agency, was returned at the same time and now works as a test pilot for Lockheed Aircraft on the West Coast.

The Central Intelligence Agency awarded Mr. Powers a medal in a super-secret ceremony two weeks ago at the CIA's headquarters in Alexandria, Va., the New York Herald Tribune reported in a copyrighted dispatch today. Like the ceremony, the Tribune said, the CIA medal is secret, is not to be worn and the recipient is not to discuss it.

VICTORY MARKED

Yesterday's Moscow disclosures came on a program devoted to honoring the 20th anniversary of victory over the Nazi invaders.

When Mr. Powers was released, the Russian people were told that it was in the interests of improving Soviet-American relations. Nothing was said about Abel.

The Moscow television commentator sai dthe name Abel actually was an assumed one. The ma nwas livin gin Moscow, he said, and probably watching the program.

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